



**Luke A. Bronin**  
**Mayor**

March 9, 2020

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Senator Kissel, Representative Rebimbas, and members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on **S.B. 403**, An Act Concerning The Board Of Pardons And Paroles, Erasure Of Criminal Records For Certain Misdemeanor And Felony Offenses And Prohibiting Discrimination Based On Erased Criminal History Record Information.

I want to thank Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Majority Leader Matt Ritter, and the many other elected officials, advocates, and Connecticut residents who have worked hard to craft this legislation. And I want to recognize Governor Lamont for introducing legislation at the very beginning of the session that would make Connecticut one of the first states in the country to enact Clean Slate legislation.

It's important to start with the broad idea in this bill and in Governor Lamont's bill. As a society, we impose consequences when people break the law. But how long after someone pays their debt to society should those consequences last?

There's broad agreement, at least in principle, that those consequences should not last a lifetime. Pennsylvania passed the first clean slate law in the nation in 2018.<sup>1</sup> The second state to pass a clean slate law was Utah, with a Republican Governor in 2019.<sup>2</sup> The ACLU supports the idea. So does JPMorgan Chase's public policy center.<sup>3</sup> The reason there's broad agreement is that there's a growing recognition of how powerful a clean slate can be, not just for individuals, but also for communities.

Clean slate is not about commuting sentences. It's not about reducing sentences. It's about whether we believe that perpetual punishment benefits our society, or whether we all do better when those who've erred and been punished have the chance to work, to pay taxes, to support their families, to live in a home that provides a stable foundation for a life well-lived within the law.

This bill would clean the slate for a broad group of Connecticut residents, some of whom have been convicted of serious offenses. According to Department of Correction (DOC) data, more than seven thousand Hartford residents released from the DOC over the last two decades would be eligible to have their records expunged under this bill.

Ultimately, this Committee has to weigh which offenses to include in this legislation. I urge you to consider including the broadest possible set of offenses, while giving careful consideration to the timelines for the expungement of particular offenses, and also to appropriate exceptions. Even individuals who committed violent crimes in the distant past are capable of profound change and our communities are stronger when those individuals have that chance.

I hope that Connecticut will continue to be a national leader in criminal justice reform by passing a strong clean slate bill like S.B. 403. Thank you for your careful consideration of this transformational legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Luke A. Bronin", is written over a horizontal line.

**Luke A. Bronin**  
**Mayor**

<sup>1</sup> Governor Tom Wolf, "Automatic Sealing of Criminal Records Takes Effect on One-Year Clean Slate Anniversary," June 28, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Crime and Justice Institute, "Utah Governor Signs Landmark Clean Slate Legislation," March 29, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> JPMorgan Chase & Co., "Removing Barriers to Employment Through Automatic Record Clearing," accessed March 3, 2020.

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